

Newspaper clippings about Robert Stroud

'Alcatraz Birdman' Dies

WASHINGTON, D. C. (AP) —Robert L. Stroud, famous "Birdman of Alcatraz," died of natural causes Thursday in the federal medical facility in Springfield, Mo., government sources reported.



STROUD

For much of Stroud's long imprisonment for murder, birds were his life. He had a laboratory and live birds. His "Stroud's Digest on the Diseases of Birds" is regarded by experts as the best published work on bird pathology.

Deaths

● The "Birdman of Alcatraz," Robert F. Stroud, 73, in the U. S. Medical Center in Springfield, Mo. Death was due to natural causes. Stroud, who had been in prison 54 years, gained fame for his research into the diseases of birds, which he was permitted to carry on in solitary confinement in prison. A recent motion picture depicted his life behind bars. Stroud killed a bartender in Alaska when he was 19, later knifed a fellow prisoner, and in 1917 stabbed a guard to death at Leavenworth. Stroud recently had been trying to get permission for the publication of a 1,000,000-word book he wrote on prison life.



STROUD

Famed Birdman Of Alcatraz Dies

SPRINGFIELD Mo. (AP) — Robert Stroud, 74, the long-time convict and writer who became known as the "Birdman of Alcatraz," died today in the U.S. Medical Center.

The prisoner, behind bars for 54 years, had spent 43 years in solitary confinement in three federal prisons. He was originally sentenced to hang for a 1909 Alaskan bar room slaying. This sentence was commuted to life and he later was given a life sentence for killing a guard at the U.S. penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kan. in 1916.

Dr. Jesse Harris, warden of the center, said Stroud was found dead in his cell bed at 5:45 a.m. CST. He said Stroud had died in his sleep of natural causes and infirmities of age.

Birdman's Plea

● Robert Stroud's request for permission for publication of a book he has written on the federal prison system was taken under advisement by a U. S. district court judge in Springfield Mo. Stroud, 73, a convicted murderer who has been in prison 54 years, is known as the "birdman of Alcatraz" for his writings on birds and their diseases. His new book is "Penology and Rehabilitation." As to whether it is lewd or obscene, Stroud said: "You have sex in prison, the same as on the outside. You describe it as it is."



STROUD

Birdman Complains

● Robert F. Stroud complained to a federal judge in Kansas City, Mo., that the government has refused to let him see either the book or the film entitled "Birdman of Alcatraz." Stroud is a prisoner at the U. S. Medical Center in Springfield, Mo. His career behind bars as a researcher into the diseases of birds was the inspiration for both book and movie. Now 73, he was imprisoned in 1909 for a bar room slaying. In 1916 he killed a prison guard. He wants the court to order Federal Bureau of Prison officials to let him see the book and film and to let him publish more books on birds and on the prison system.



STROUD

March 22, 1964

DES MOINES SUNDAY REGISTER

3-G

Remarkable Remarks

● The will of the famed "birdman of Alcatraz," Robert Stroud, filed for probate in Los Angeles, Cal., labeled today's prisons a disgrace and directed use of what funds are available from his estate to design better, more efficient ones. The estate consists mostly of royalties from writings about him. He died at 73 last Nov. 21. In one place in his will, Stroud, a convicted slayer, said:

"It is not my nature to hate people, but to like them if they will let me and are willing to accept me as I am, and never in my life have I hated anyone so much that I was unable to forgive and forget."



STROUD

● Guy Trosper, 52, producer of the movie "Birdman of Alcatraz," of a heart attack in Hollywood, Cal.

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Des Moines Tribune
11-21-63

Photograph Fri. 11 Sat. 11

W.T.G.F.

government ordered the expulsion Tuesday of the Soviet Union's ambassador on a diplomatic mission to the Congo.

Des Moines Register
Mon. 11-22-1963

Members of the mission were accused of subversion and given 48 hours to get out.

Premier Cyrille Adoula said, however, that the expulsion does not mean a break in diplomatic relations with Moscow. He said his government would consider the credentials of any new diplomats the Russians might send.

Two Arrested

Adoula's order followed the arrest Tuesday of two Soviet diplomats on their return from neighboring Brazzaville, capital of the former French Congo, where they were said to have made contact with anti-government exiles.

They were carrying documents, officials said, proving "irrefutably" that they had been in contact with a government in exile opposed to

POP Drive In

l Saturday

WS-R

MISS

Congo Seize Le

Evening, November 21, 1963

prisoners on the penitentiary rolls.

Patrolmen Near

A number of Iowa Highway Patrol cars converged on Fort Madison but did not gather at the penitentiary. Warden John Bennett said he did not call them. They remained on a standby basis at the police station.

The flareup was the second in eight days in an Iowa penal institution. Prisoners in Anamosa Reformatory did \$263,



Rules Issued for Expense Accounts

WASHINGTON, D. C. (AP)—The government issued its new limits on expense account tax deductions Friday. They tighten the rules—but not as severely as a lot of convention-going, martini-buying businessmen had feared.

As long as there's a deal cooking and no such distractions as a jazz band or chorus girls, the bill for much entertainment related to business is still deductible.

If there's a business purpose, a husband can take along his wife and deduct for her dinner and drinks, too.

If a yacht or country club membership gets more than 50 per cent use for business reasons, part of the expense may be deducted.

U.S. Offers 'Review' of Panama Rift

From The Register's Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON, D. C.—President Johnson restated U. S. terms for settling its dispute with Panama Saturday, but his statement left the key point still somewhat cloudy.

"We are prepared to review every issue which now divides us, and every problem which the Panamanians wish to raise said in a statement Organization of (O. A. S.), who mediate the dispute."



flashed through the ship. The British Royal Navy decided against sending out units since other ships in

Magazine Articles About Robert Stroud

Agony of the Caged Birdman
Coronet 44:90-5 October, 1958.

*Prodigious Intellect in Solitary
Life 48:140-2+ April 11, 1960.

*Saga of a Strange Jailbird
Life 39+ August 24, 1962.

Scholar in Alcatraz
Newsweek 27-28 April 7, 1958.

✓ The Amatuer Scientist
Scientific American 143-153 December, 1957.

about Robert Stroud

BIRDMAN CONTINUED

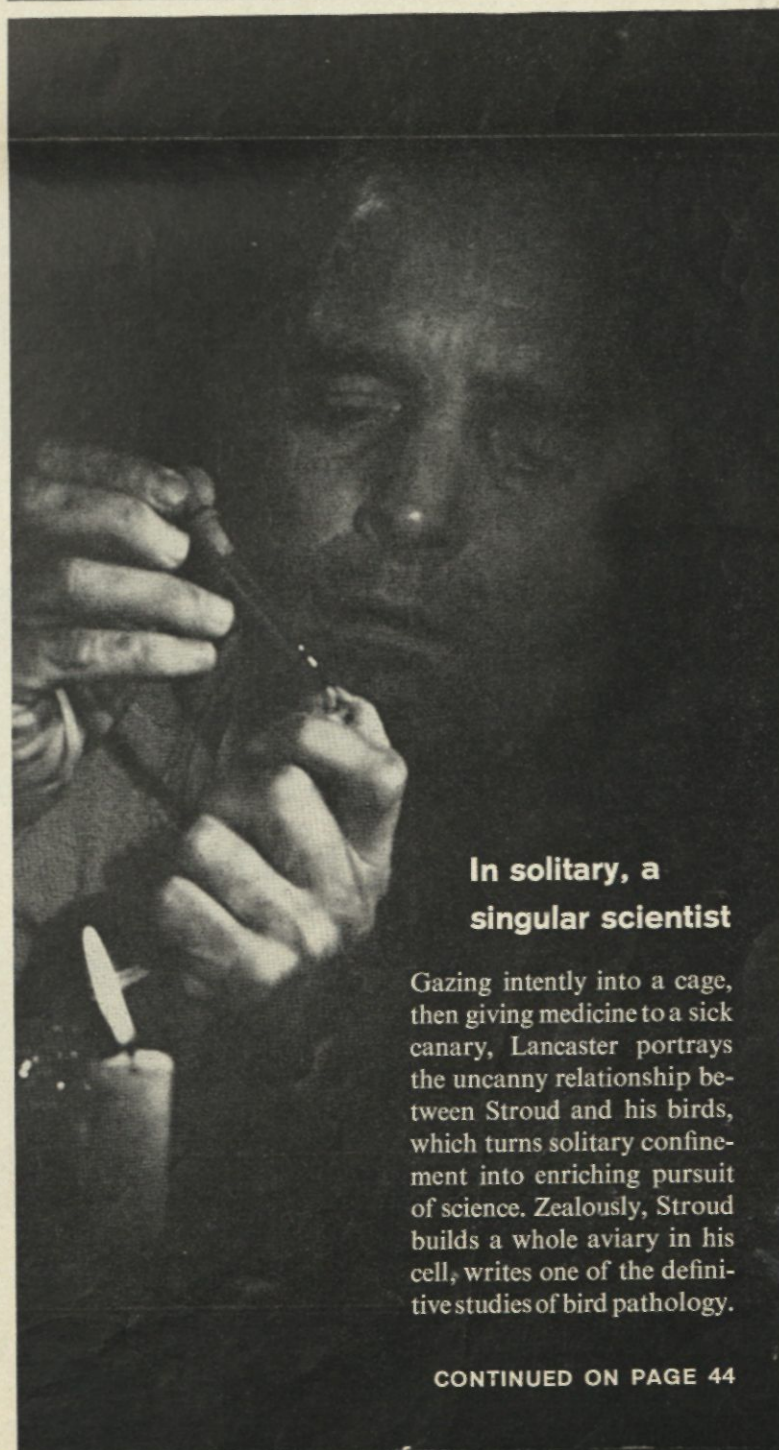
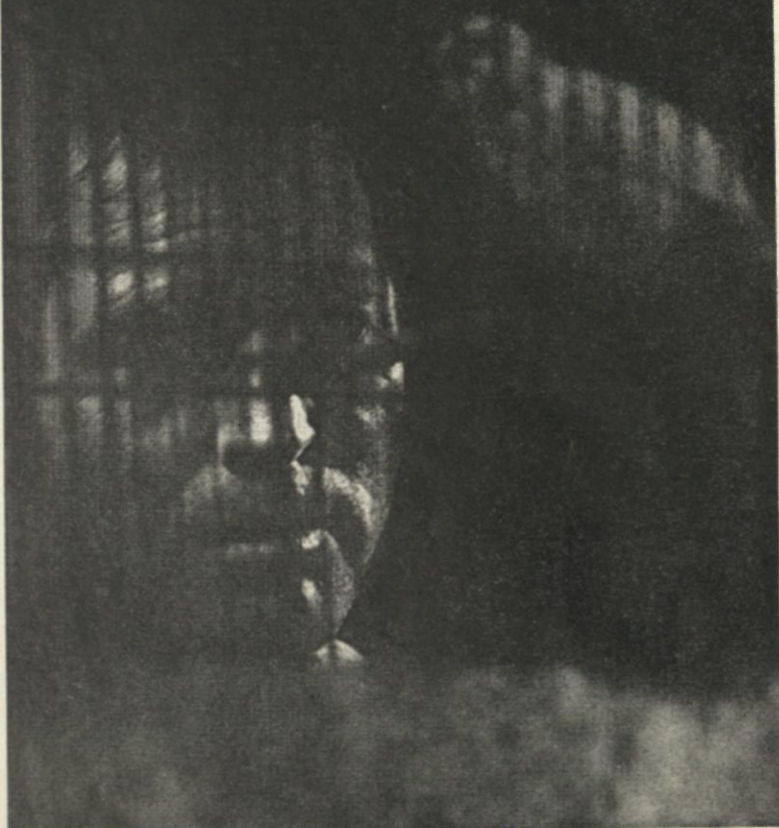
A box-office dose of extra blood-and-guts



In a prison film the cell block riot is a predictable ritual, like the capework of a matador. This picture has a bang-up good one as the climax to an otherwise quiet narrative. The real Stroud refused to join the famous Alcatraz riot of 1946 on which it is based. Lancaster likewise stays out of the revolt, only lends a hand with the wounded.



BIRDMAN CONTINUED



In solitary, a singular scientist

Gazing intently into a cage, then giving medicine to a sick canary, Lancaster portrays the uncanny relationship between Stroud and his birds, which turns solitary confinement into enriching pursuit of science. Zealously, Stroud builds a whole aviary in his cell, writes one of the definitive studies of bird pathology.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44



Blackbeard

When we got Blackbeard we got our ocean Captain Edward Teach, master of the vessel *Queen Revenge*, was a sailing man's sailor, right to the tip of his cutlass. He was also a freebooter, a buccaneer, a sea devil. For he was Blackbeard. This blackguard, this infamous villain, terrorized America's early coast line during the days when piracy was a way of life for men bedazzled by dreams of quick money, easily gotten. In Blackbeard's case perhaps it was the spectre of his 14 wives that drove him to plot and plunder under the Jolly Roger. But all bad things must come to an end and Blackbeard's end was as spectacular as his ruthless beginning as an apprentice pirate under Benjamin Hornigold. Caught by Lieutenant Robert Maynard, commander of *H.M.S. Pearl*, at Ocracoke Island, Blackbeard fought like an indestructible demon but finally fell with 25 wounds in his body.

Thus, the Blackbeard embargo was broken and a young and growing America again shipped goods on an unmolested sea.

You re-discover the reasons behind our hard-won heritage of freedom when you re-discover America. Come, take the high road to history by car. The rewards are yours forever—the sights and sounds of this, our land.

in America...and, As You Travel, Ask

sign that's just ahead is American-born and American-bred. When you've met it, that you expect more from Standard and you get



STANDARD OIL DIVISION

Escape From Alcatraz by J. Campbell Bruce

This is the story of Alcatraz, the federal prison that held dangerous criminals for nearly thirty years.

In the slate waters of San Francisco Bay, between the city and the Golden Gate, thirteen acres of gray rock thrust up like a clenched fist: the island of Alcatraz.

Prohibition had convicted many gangsters such as Al Capone, so in 1933 the Military Disciplinary Barracks at Alcatraz was abandoned, and turned over to the Department of Justice to be converted into a maximum-security prison.

Supersecurity precautions were adopted: tool-steel bats, sharp cyclone fences, barbed wire entanglements, tall towers and numerous catwalks. The island waters were zoned to prohibit approach.

Riots, such as the one in 1946, and several attempted escapes tightened these security measures.

The famous escape in June, 1962, which took months of planning by three men, is discussed in great detail, as well as the final escape from Alcatraz on December 16, 1962.

This book covers the time right before the Rock was closed, in 1963.

ALCATRAZ

Alcatraz was a federal prison located on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. This penitentiary housed criminals considered unusually danderous.

Alcatraz stands on twelve acres of solid rock high above the bay. It is separated from the mainland by more than a mile of water. The island, shaped like a battleship, planted in the middle of the San Francisco Bay, greets travelers from the Pacific as the Statue of Liberty greets those from the Atlantic.

The Spanish used Alcatraz Island as a fortress and prison. The dungeons they cut in the rock were used for storage purposes. The rock island, a United States fortification since 1853, once held captive Indian chiefs. The administration building and cell house were built in 1909. It was a military prison during the Roaring Twenties, holding nearly 400 soldier-inmates. They had visitors weekly, wrote two letters a month, and were allowed to read and subscribe to newspapers. A trained psychiatrist was in residence. In 1924, its net cost was \$272,000.

In 1933 the United States Department of Justice took over the administration of Alcatraz, and converted it into a maximum-security prison. When it became a civilian prison to hold, punish, and break the intractable number of Federal inmates, Alcatraz ten times as much, housed half as many and became, depending upon who viewed it, a national symbol of security and strictness, or a dire monument to a dead penal concept.

The silence system was brought back. Radios and newspapers were forbidden, correspondence and visiting restricted, handicrafts prohibited, recreation cut down, commissary abolished, tear-gas bombs suspended overhead in the dining room, and electric eyes and automatic locks installed.

Supersecurity precautions were adopted: tool-steel bars, sharp cyclone fences, barbed wire entanglements, tall towers, and numerous catwalks. The island waters were zoned to prohibit approach, lending doubt to the claim that the island tides made swimming away impossible. The year before Alcatraz became a Federal prison, two women swam from San Francisco to Alcatraz, bucked the tide, circled the island and landed at the South End Rowing Club.

There were riots in Alcatraz in 1939 and 1946. All supplies, including fresh water, had to be brought to the island from the mainland by boat. Upkeep per prisoner was more than \$10 a day, while at Atlanta, for example, it is \$3. In the late 1950's, there was a strong movement to abolish it, especially as it was falling to pieces physically and it would cost \$4 million to renovate it.

On June 12, 1962, Frank L. Morris, John Anglin, and Clarence Anglin dug their way out of Alcatraz Prison with spoons. But the presumption was that all drowned in their attempt to reach the mainland. John Paul Scott, a bank robber, became the first Alcatraz escapee ever to swim to the mainland. He was picked up immediately, however, and returned to the island prison.

Alcatraz, for 30 years the maximum security federal prison for dangerous criminals, was closed in 1963. On March 21, the last prisoners were transferred to other federal institutions.

It had housed such famous prisoners as Al Capone, George "Machine Gun" Kelly, and Robert "The Birdman" Stroud.

AUG 24 1962

MOVIES

**BURT LANCASTER AS
STROUD OF ALCATRAZ**



Saga of a Strange Jailbird

Only an imaginative casting director could equate the athletic movie star with the scholarly convict, frail and bald at 72. But in United Artists' *Birdman of Alcatraz*, Burt Lancaster's performance as the real-life Robert Stroud, pictured above outside a court hearing this year, is a tour de force. Strikingly made up, Lancaster gives piercing realism to the saga of the nonconformist who has spent more than 50 years in prison, 43 of them in dreaded deep-lock, solitary confinement. Drawn from Thomas Gaddis' book, the film re-creates all the painful years of the bird expert's incredible self-education and scientific achievement. Despite a lapse into commercial melodrama near the end, it is an eloquent study of imprisonment and individuality that might well earn *Birdman* Lancaster an Academy Award.





FIRST BIG BREAK for Rod was his nationwide TV bow on Perry Como's Thanksgiving show. He earned \$1,000, was seen by Movie Producer Hal Wallis.



SCREEN TEST Rod made for Wallis included a song and three dramatic vignettes. Here, he studies script as one of his scenes is run off on screen.



PLUGGING HIS LATEST RECORD, *Listen My Love*, Rod is swamped by autograph hounds during 24-hour stint as guest disk jockey in Sacramento.

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Biography - Strowd, Robert

Life - April 11, 1960

PRODIGIOUS INTELLECT IN SOLITARY

Impenitent killer Robert Stroud, who is famed for bird treatise, sees new hope for freedom

by PAUL O'NEIL, *Life Staff Writer*

IN federal penitentiaries, as in those little cellblocks of circumstance in which we all serve time, most men conclude that conformity is synonymous with common sense. The man who stoops to survive is encouraged by a world which offers rewards to stool pigeons and asks only that a convict stay quietly behind his bars. If defiance in adversity is the final, ennobling duty of the human spirit, there are few noble souls in prison—or few, at any rate, who do not finally surrender, die or lose their minds under the thud of the long gray years.

Here is the story of Robert Stroud—impenitent killer, convict, scholar, scientist, nonconformist—who has survived on his own terms.

Few humans in any age have been held in prison as long as Stroud, who has now spent more than 50 years continuously behind walls, all but a few months of those years in tough, heavily guarded institutions—McNeil Island, Leavenworth and Alcatraz. It is doubtful that anyone since the Man in the Iron Mask has lived out his life in the kind of isolation which Stroud has survived. Forty-three of those 50 gray years have been spent in solitary confinement (or “administrative segregation,” as the Federal Bureau of Prisons prefers to call it) during which he has eaten alone in his cell, has never mingled with the prison population and has been denied, for years on end, the privileges of the prison exercise yard. He has become, as a result, a sort of invisible man. All but a few who remember him as a stripling of 19 in 1909—the year he went to prison—are dead. For the last 18 years he has been allowed only one regular visitor, a brother. Except for two lawyers no other callers have been permitted to see him. His correspondence is limited and, as with all prisoners, his mail is censored.

Stroud has not spent his decades in prison without reason. He has killed two men: a bartender named Charlie Dahmer, whom he shot in Juneau, Alaska in 1909, and a prison guard named Andrew F. Turner, whom he stabbed to death at Leavenworth Penitentiary in 1916. He has lived his life in solitary as specific punishment for killing the guard. When he knifed Turner, Stroud struck at the very basis of the penal system—the harsh discipline by which herds of bored, resentful and sometimes desperate men are controlled in overcrowded penitentiaries. After failing in three attempts to get him hanged, both the Attorney General of

the U.S. and prison officialdom resolved that he should live the rest of his days as an object lesson to other recalcitrant convicts.

Time and rigorous censorship of the Stroud case makes it extremely difficult to weigh his crimes. One can only plow through old trial records, old letters and faded newspaper clippings in an attempt to decide whether they were committed under extreme provocation (as Stroud claims) or were (as the government insists) simply exercises of cold, premeditated vengeance. Time, however, has not altered the prison bureau's attitude toward Stroud. The average life sentence runs but 10 years, and even so controversial a murderer as Nathan Leopold was freed after 34 years. But though Stroud has engaged in surprising feats of self-rehabilitation, it seems doubtful that the government will ever voluntarily set him free.

An iron stoicism

STROUD has never begged for quarter and has never expressed the slightest contrition for his crimes. He has borne a wasting disease and the endless indignities of prison routine with iron stoicism. He has not raised a hand to another man since 1916 and has devoted himself for 40 years to the passionate development and exercise of a remarkable intellect. Since the publication five years ago of Thomas E. Gaddis' study of the Stroud case, *Birdman of Alcatraz*, thousands of people have written from all over the world to applaud both his courage and his accomplishments. The most noted of his achievements is *Stroud's Digest of the Diseases of Birds*, which he wrote after 20 years of study and experiment with canaries in his cell at Leavenworth, and which is the most authoritative and comprehensive work on this subject ever published. But though he became eligible for parole in 1937, and though his case has been reviewed 23 times in the last 23 years, there has never been any suggestion that the Federal Board of Parole has ever seriously considered his release.

Stroud maintains that he “could have been out of here years ago” if he had ever stooped to bootlicking. But he would seem, literally, to prefer death. “I am neither a moron nor a sycophant, the only types they conceive worthy,” he wrote in one letter, “but a man of strong character who in 50 years has not been broken and who cannot be broken. I am



STUDYING HIS CANARIES, hundreds of which he kept in his Leavenworth cell, Stroud pursued the research which won him nationwide renown.

still Prometheus and I can endure . . . to the end if necessary." Stroud, the stir-wise old con, has lived with prison regulations for half a lifetime, but Stroud the defiant individualist has engaged, decade after decade, in a remorseless contest of wills with the Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, James V. Bennett.

Stroud has never ceased trying to use public opinion to wring concessions from his jailers. He has got his name into the newspapers with embarrassing frequency and has managed, at times, to outwit and defeat the whole U.S. prison system. Most of his triumphs have been short lived, but his impulse to dominate rather than be dominated has remained unquenched. Bennett has been forced for 30 long years to deal with Stroud's complaints, to answer letters from irate bird lovers ("Bird brains! Bird brains!" he sometimes exclaims), to endure interrogation from the press and to compose letters to congressmen and senators about "the man who raised the canaries in his cell." One is impelled to wonder whether Stroud has not, with the weapon of his terrible endurance, inflicted some subtle and nagging wound in the heart of his jailer during this endless, one-sided struggle.

Bennett, an assured, pleasant lawyer of 65, is sometimes hailed as the most enlightened penologist in U.S. history. He is, without question, the most successful of the prison reformers—an able administrator who has utilized techniques and ideas which earlier and less practical penal theorists were incapable of putting into practice. He has not only molded the federal prison system into the image of the New Penology, which proposes to classify and rehabilitate rather than punish criminals, but has set a powerful example for the state prisons to follow. He is, by all accounts, a decent and honorable man. But his handling of the Stroud case and his reaction to Stroud himself raise questions indeed, when viewed against this solid background of balance and achievement.

Bennett refuses to allow anyone access to the bureau's records of the case, refuses to discuss it for publication or to allow any employee of the federal system to do so. Above all, he refuses to allow any contact with Stroud, although he will disparage the old prisoner at length once he has exacted the protection of a no-quotation agreement. He does his level best to prevent publication of anything concerning Stroud—and often succeeds. (Simultaneously, although he holds that the bureau's files are "confidential," he offers every cooperation on stories or pictures about "more interesting" convicts.) Bennett maintains, in justification, that he is duty bound to take this attitude toward a troublemaker like Stroud out of simple justice to the majority of 22,000 federal prisoners who have vanished behind walls "without a trace." But he also refuses to discuss his own important part in the Stroud case. It would be impossible to describe it, in fact, if he had not left behind him, over the years, unqualified statements about the old prisoner which a patient reporter can collect and, in good conscience, use.

Bennett's most recent suppression of the Stroud story occurred in 1958 in Los Angeles when he dissuaded executives of 20th Century-Fox from doing a motion picture which was to have been based on Gaddis' book and which might have yielded Stroud the first important money of his life. Bennett was frank to say that he had done everything he could to prevent the New York publishing firm of Random House from bringing out the book. He warned the Fox people "for their own good" that they should not risk the movie since they did not know the truth as he knew it. He insisted, without specifying, that the Gaddis book was "a pack of lies" and denied the company access to any federal prison, although offering to cooperate on some more suitable picture.

When Producer Jack Cummings asked his opinion of Stroud's intellect, Bennett answered, "I find him rather dull. Oh, he's cunning." When questioned about Stroud's accomplishments, he said, "He amused himself with those canaries." When the worried moviemakers felt impelled to check on Stroud's sanity (Bennett has refused to release a report on Stroud made by famed Psychiatrist Karl Menninger after an extended interview with the prisoner one day at Alcatraz), he replied, "The old man is not psychotic but he is getting senile."

But little about the Stroud case—or what is visible of the Stroud case

—is really quite as black and white as this might make it sound. Unquestionably Stroud has been a difficult and troublesome prisoner. He is also one of the most cantankerous old men alive in the world today. He insists, for instance, that parole would violate his right to free and unconditional pardon and has sworn to refuse it if it is ever offered to him, although he is now 70 and the marks of prison lie heavily on him.

Stroud is a tall (6 feet 3 inches), bald and emaciated being who wears old-fashioned steel spectacles. He suffers from a chronic kidney ailment and a type of arteriosclerosis which causes him pain in his hands and feet. He reads Cicero and Baudelaire in the original Latin and French, but he speaks with an old lag's defensive caution—softly, and with no perceptible movement of the lips. At Alcatraz he formed the habit

of grasping his barred door while talking, and rocking himself endlessly back and forth like a bemused zoo chimp. He is a food faddist who believes that meat, fish and vegetables should all be eaten raw and is convinced that the two greatest killers of all time are "the milk cow and the cookstove." But neither his ego, illnesses nor eccentricities have prevented his viewing himself with merciless detachment.

"I do not want you to get the idea that Stroud is in any sense a hero or a genius," he wrote as guidance at the time 20th Century-Fox was planning its picture about him. "He is neither. He is an unfortunate human being who got off in life on the wrong foot, almost from birth; a criminal, a murderer, a man who has done many evil, shameful and terrible things and has suffered terrible punishments. He is a pronounced egotist. The one outstanding thing about him is that he has been a fighter from the day of his birth. He has always

fought against heartbreaking odds and without the advantages of preparation for the battle of life. So . . . though Stroud is as devoid of conventional morals as a chicken is of teeth, his story contains one great moral lesson. Man can die, but he can never be a slave until he himself accepts slavery."

This is not to say, however, that Stroud blames himself for his crimes. He is convinced that his nature was distorted in childhood by a warping and unnatural possessiveness on the part of his mother, Elizabeth, and that the "evil, shameful and terrible" things he did were inevitable "since no God ever made a man to be a coward." As a boy in Seattle, he was withdrawn and quiet and had an obsessive compassion for weaker creatures—his little brother Marc, stray dogs and cats. But he also had an instinct for violence. At the age of 10 when his father knocked him down, "I came up out of the dirt with a rock in each hand. The first one hit him in the chest hard enough to break two ribs. He treated me with respect after that."

A rival's ultimatum

AT 13 he ran away from home, turned hobo and eventually made his way to Alaska. At 18—tough, gangling, ignorant, repressed—he met Kitty O'Brien, a full-fledged, shopworn saloon hustler of 36. Kitty took him in, nursed him through an attack of pneumonia, and shared her bed and earnings with him. Then, one cold night in 1909, a man named Charlie Dahmer announced that he was replacing Stroud in Kitty's scheme of life. Dahmer, a Russian-born rough-and-tumble fighter of note, also gave her a savage beating to dissuade her from any sentimental reservations.

"Kill him," said Kitty when Stroud came back to their furnished room. Charlie Dahmer's fate—and Stroud's—was sealed in that moment. Stroud stared at Kitty's blackened eyes, reached into a drawer in which she kept a .38-caliber pistol, walked down the street and bought a box of cartridges. Dahmer's shack was empty. Stroud waited inside, and when Dahmer got home, Stroud shot him dead. Then he walked to the U.S. marshal's office and turned himself in. To save Kitty standing trial as his accomplice, he pleaded guilty to manslaughter.

"From my sixth year," Stroud has written, "I have never had any fear of death, probably because most of my life has been so miserable." But if freedom was misery, McNeil Island near Tacoma was worse. Prisoners wore stripes, the silence system (no talking at meals or at work) was



BROTHER Marcus, now sales executive, lives in Sacramento, Calif.



MOTHER, supported by Stroud from sales of birds, died in 1938.

STROUD CONTINUED

enforced, and inmates were often handcuffed to their cell doors as punishment. Stroud had expected a light sentence but had got the maximum term allowed by statute: 12 years. He was a recalcitrant and bitter prisoner. When a stool pigeon reported him for stealing food, he jammed a kitchen knife into the man, lost his chance of parole and was shipped off to Leavenworth, the "tough joint" on the Kansas prairie.

Leavenworth's knife-packing prisoners lived by a jungle law of their own. Its guards enforced a harsh but uneasy discipline by recourse to "snitches," the "hole," the 25-pound ball and chain, and hardwood clubs which were mandatory equipment on duty. Stroud endured the dismal prison routine, endless meals of "Billygoat stew" and the painful beginnings of Bright's disease without complaint, although he wrote "mother darling" that he thought of "ending it all." But on Saturday, March 25, 1916—seven years after he began his sentence—he came back to his cell and found something which made his "breast chock up with emotion." It was a basket of fruit from his brother Marc, who had come all the way from Alaska to see him and had been turned away because of a ban on weekend visitors.

Marc proposed to call again in a few days. Stroud, nevertheless, burned with resentment, and that night at supper he muttered indignantly to the man beside him. This was a clear violation of the silence system. Guard Andrew F. Turner, a muscular, bespectacled Arkansan, was standing immediately behind him and instantly called, "Give me your number." Stroud froze, but dutifully intoned: "Eight one five four." His visiting privileges, he knew, would be withdrawn if the guard reported him to the warden, and Stroud spent a sleepless night.

As Turner passed in the mess hall at noon the next day, Stroud raised his hand and when the guard nodded, rose and demanded, "Turner, did you shoot me?"—i.e., report me. The conversation was virtually lost in the clatter of dishes and the sound of the prison brass band at the end of the big hall playing a song entitled *In Paradise*. The men faced each other for a few seconds. Then, according to a witness, Stroud "with a sinuous and undulating motion" pulled a knife from the lining of his blue dress coat and thrust it into Turner's chest "two and a half inches from center." Blood gushed from the guard's mouth and nose, and while 1,100 startled convicts stared in fascination, he toppled, dying, to the floor.

'Lack of news'

DEAR FATHER," Stroud wrote thereafter, "I will drop you a few lines . . . Things have been somewhat upset here for me of late—March 26 I got up from the table at the noon meal and had a little talk with the guard who was standing in the aisle—The guard took sick and died all of a sudden—He died of heart trouble—I guess you would call it a puncture of the heart—Anyhow there was a knife hole in it—They are holding me for murder—My case goes before the grand jury next Wednesday and I shall try to get a trial at once. I have never give any reason for doing it so they won't have much to work on only that I killed him and that won't do much good for I will admit that—Well, father, I will have to close for lack of news. Your loving son. R. F. Stroud."

Stroud was encouraged to write to anyone he wished. None of his letters left the prison. Each was extracted from the prison mail, opened, and filed away to be used against him. Before and during his three trials, which extended over three years, the government took many other extraordinary measures to ensure his execution. One judge ruled that the testimony of a convicted criminal was inadmissible. This denied the defense any case at all, but the prosecution utilized the ruling handsomely by handing seven prisoners unconditional pardons for taking the stand against Stroud. In two trials the defense



WILL A FORTUNE GO? To most Americans, \$1000 or more is a bonanza, a windfall—a small fortune. How many teddy bears, how many meals, how many nights of sleep? Always the question, "What happens when it's all over?" A wife and family from a whole lot of worry by a sudden windfall. And no one is better equipped to help you than The Travelers Insurance Company. Building brighter futures through insurance. How can you get beneath The Travelers umbrella? Look for him in the Yellow Pages. He's waiting for your call.

Monthly check to pay—that's the modern Travelers way!" **THE TRAVELERS** Insurance Company
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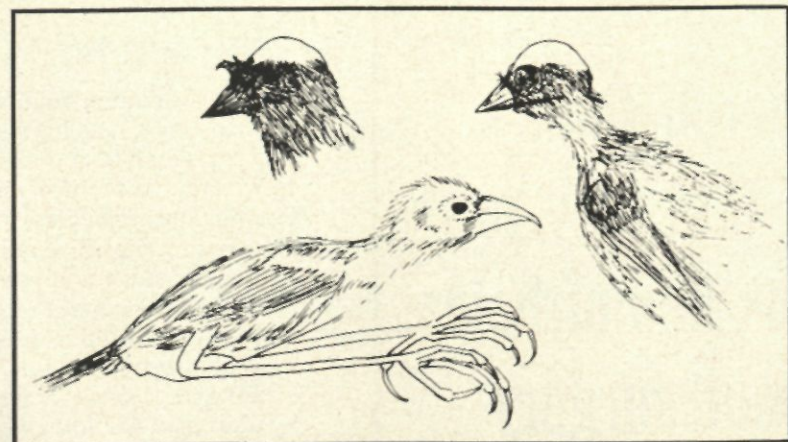


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DRAWINGS BY STROUD, among 240 which he made for his *Digest*, showed canary suffering from baldness (top), molt (right), rickets (bottom).

STROUD CONTINUED

did manage to elicit scraps of testimony that Guard Turner was a tough screw who believed Stroud was "dogeyeing" him and needed "a club wore out on his head." But the defense was barely able to suggest a rumor which, true or false, every convict believed: that Turner had been transferred from Atlanta to Leavenworth because he had clubbed a prisoner to death. (This rumor, it should be added, is vehemently denied by Turner's widow, who still lives, still clips news articles about Stroud, and still believes the man who caused her to raise two sons in poverty has gone too long unchanged.)

Each trial, however, really turned on a more important question: had Turner raised his club to hit Stroud over the head before he was stabbed? The defense insisted he had. But three Kansas juries decided not—perhaps because they were unable to disbelieve John M. Purcell, captain of the guards. Purcell testified that Turner had held his club tucked between his left arm and his body at the moment Stroud knifed him. He went on to tell how "Mr. Turner then turned deathly pale and wavered and raised his right hand a little [to signal Purcell] and then reached around with it to get the club... and got it out..." and how "Stroud grabbed at the club... and looked Mr. Turner right in the eye..." and finally how "Mr. Turner tipped forward... and pitched down on his face in the aisle."

Stroud appealed after his first trial (the judge had neglected to inform the jury that it could specify a life sentence if it wished), stubbornly appealed after the second (although the jury *had* specified a life sentence), and after the third trial was sentenced to be hanged. But seven days before the execution date Leavenworth resounded to a dull, rhythmic and triumphant sound—convicts pounding in unison on bars and pipes. Woodrow Wilson had commuted Stroud's death sentence to life imprisonment.

A cramped new world

THUS, at 30, Stroud found himself inhabiting a world precisely 12 feet long and six feet wide. His bare, roughly plastered "segregation" cell contained a cot, a toilet, a washbowl and assorted resident cockroaches. A dim 25-watt electric light dangled from a cord in the ceiling. A small, barred window admitted daylight at one end. Stroud seemed relieved to find himself there.

His mother, who had moved to Kansas, had spent her life savings in "my Robbie's" defense and had won him the presidential commutation, did her best to have him removed from solitary and transferred to Atlanta. Stroud refused any part of the scheme—he was coldly certain some stool pigeon would try to kill him. He was also becoming aware, through extension courses in mathematics and astronomy, that he was the possessor of an unusual intellect, and he had begun to believe it might be the key with which he could re-enter the world of men.

Two newly hatched sparrows shortly lent feverish purpose to his monastic existence. He picked them up under a broken branch in the prison yard (to which he was admitted alone for exercise periods), took them to his cell, raised them and taught them tricks. At a signal, they would roll over on his cot and play dead. He started raising canaries and then, with his mother's assistance, sold them on the outside. The rotting idleness of a lifetime—or even a year—in solitary has driven many men to madness, but Stroud found himself working and studying 14, 16, even 20 hours a day. Keeping even a few birds in a cell taxed all his ingenuity. He was forced, at first, to collect bugs and flies simply to feed them. But eventually, with the somewhat indifferent sanction of the authorities, he had 300 canaries in an airy complex of cages hand built from sliced-up cigar boxes. Eventually, too, he had almost a half ton of scientific equipment jammed into his cell.

When birds fell sick he struggled, often unsuccessfully, to cure

CONTINUED

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STROUD CONTINUED

them. This failing, he dissected them—with no more instruments, in the beginning, than his fingernails—and attempted to understand and find cures for ailments which his government handbooks did not seem to explain. In the process he soaked up enormous drafts of book-learning: pharmacology, chemistry, medicine, bacteriology. As he read, he grew horrified at his own semi-illiteracy and crammed courses in English usage and syntax. Living with his birds 24 hours a day sharpened his powers of observation, and as he strove for scientific method and scientific detachment, he began discovering in himself a kind of scientific insight.

"The force of desperation produced ideas," he wrote, "that any medical man would have pronounced absurd." Many of them were. But many of them worked. He began marketing them commercially as well as his canaries. Stroud's Effervescent Bird Salts, Stroud's Special Prescription and Stroud's Salts No. 1 became widely heralded specifics for diseases of birds. Stroud accumulated an ancient Remington typewriter, learned to use it, and wrote numberless articles for canary journals. Simultaneously he maintained a correspondence with 2,000 owners and breeders. By 1930 he was making money enough to support his mother, and Robert Stroud, Box 7, Leavenworth, Kan. was America's supreme authority on the care and breeding of canaries and other caged birds.

In 1931, however, as a prelude to the organization of a system of prison industries, convicts were forbidden to engage in private business of any kind. Stroud was given 60 days to get rid of his birds. He put a piece of paper in his typewriter and forthwith began his 30 years' war with the federal government. "I know that if you are one of the thousands of bird breeders Robert Stroud has helped through the years," he wrote, "you will be interested in this letter . . . the man who bends low over his typewriter every night until 3 . . . to help you . . . is himself a bird in a cage, a convict serving a life sentence in solitary confinement. . . ." He went on to explain that a heartless bureaucracy was about to rob him of his canaries.

The cult of the canary has been superseded today by what might be described as palship with parakeets, but it was a vehement freemasonry in the 1920s and early 1930s and most of its votaries seemed incapable of believing ill of a man who loved a bird. One zealot, a dumpy, middle-aged widow named Della May Jones, smuggled Stroud's letter out of the prison and had thousands of copies sent to bird fanciers across the country. The repercussions were astounding.

The bureau retreats

BIRD lovers hurried to newspapers in coveys and sat down by aroused brigades to write to Washington. One hundred congressmen descended upon the hapless reformers in the new bureau of prisons. In the face of this uproar the bureau hastily took a new tack: Stroud, it announced, would be allowed to keep his birds if he would agree to turn his profits over to a fund for prisoners and accept a salary from the prison system for extra duties performed. "Socialism!" cried Stroud, and refused. James V. Bennett, at that time 37 and a newly appointed assistant director of the bureau, was then dispatched to Leavenworth to negotiate directly with the prisoner. Stroud flatly refused to cooperate with him. Eventually, to its hideous embarrassment, the prison system was forced into a long list of concessions: Stroud was given two cells with a connecting door, new laboratory equipment, new spectacles and new electrical outlets. To rationalize these privileges with the new rules regarding ordinary inmates Stroud was categorized as a special prisoner of the bureau.

The war, however, had only begun. Stroud's correspondence was soon cut to two letters a week. He was forbidden to contribute to magazines. He responded by writing messages in onion juice (which became legible when pressed with a hot iron) and slipping them past the prison censors in hollowed-out sections of the cages in which he shipped his birds. When the prison grapevine informed him that he was one of the "incorrigibles" who were shortly to be gathered from federal penal institutions and salted away in the new penitentiary at Alcatraz, he began casting around for some method of making himself too noticeable to move. After reading an old law book from the prison library Stroud decided that the Treaty of Paris, in 1803, had granted inhabitants of the Louisiana Purchase (which included Kansas) the right to marry by simply signing a contract. A few days before Leavenworth's hard cases were due for transfer, Della May Jones showed up at the Kansas City *Star* with a document typed out by Stroud and a story which soon blossomed in newspapers from coast to coast. She and Robert, she announced, had become man and wife.

The trick worked, although Stroud paid for his audacity. His jailers, with his mother's encouragement, ruled that he could never see Della May again. Meanwhile they filed the whole embarrassing incident away under unfinished business. In his own mind, Stroud had

STROUD CONTINUED

simply been defending a God-given right to be a "self-respecting human being." But the executives of the prison bureau saw it as a cunning and vindictive assault on their personal authority and on the precarious balance of penal discipline. Nine more years passed, nevertheless, before Stroud was sent to The Rock. He utilized them in the fierce hope of leaving some imprint of greatness on the world, by writing *Stroud's Digest of the Diseases of Birds*.



LAWYER Stanley Furman became interested in the Stroud case in 1955, has represented prisoner thus far without fee.

A great many of Stroud's remedies are now outmoded by antibiotics. But the *Digest* is more than a text on avian therapeutics: it is also a reflection of its author's strange and indomitable personality and a record of his long, painful and triumphant exploration of the world of the intellect.

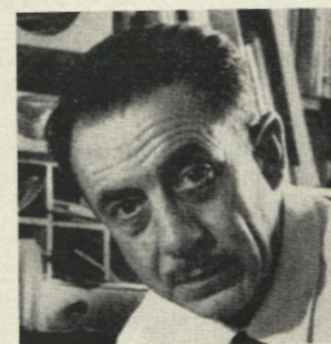
Stroud tried to write "in language no 10-year-old child could fail to understand," and for all the complex nature of his subject he contrived to inject innumerable patches of homely observation. "Unlike mammals," he noted in his first paragraph, "birds have air cavities in the principal bones

. . . and there are cases . . . of birds breathing through a broken wing bone while their heads were entirely submerged in water." Mosquitoes, he wrote, often attack the feet of birds at night. "Old birds will flutter to the floor where they protect their feet by sitting on them. But young birds are afraid to leave the perch and [simply] kick with [one] free foot; it sounds something like two dots—dash—two dots as sounded on a telegraph instrument."

The bulk of the book, however, mirrors the author's self-taught science, fantastic patience and ornithological insights. While writing it, Stroud taught himself to use an old microscope donated to him in 1936 by Wesleyan University, and over a period of two years, using only a razor blade and scraps of glass and metal, he constructed a microtome capable of slicing tissue to 1/12,000 of an inch. He experimented with 65 staining techniques—and then, simply to produce one 13-page chapter on the blood of birds, spent 3,000 hours at the eyepiece and his drawing board. His jailers were not impressed. Bennett, who had by now become director and was therefore ultimately responsible for Stroud, gave reluctant consent to the book's publication. But in 1942 he ordered that Stroud be moved, at last, to Alcatraz, taking nothing but the clothes on his back.

It was at this point, in the minds of Stroud's increasing number of defenders, that he became subject to cruel and unusual punishment. Guard-killer or not, he was now 52 years old, was partially crippled by disease, and had—no matter what suspicions his jailers may have entertained about him—spent 20 years attempting to be of some use to the world. Few partisans in the Stroud case deny that he may well have driven officialdom at Leavenworth to distraction. But even if transfer was necessary, they demand, why Alcatraz, and why the insistence on solitary far into Stroud's old age?

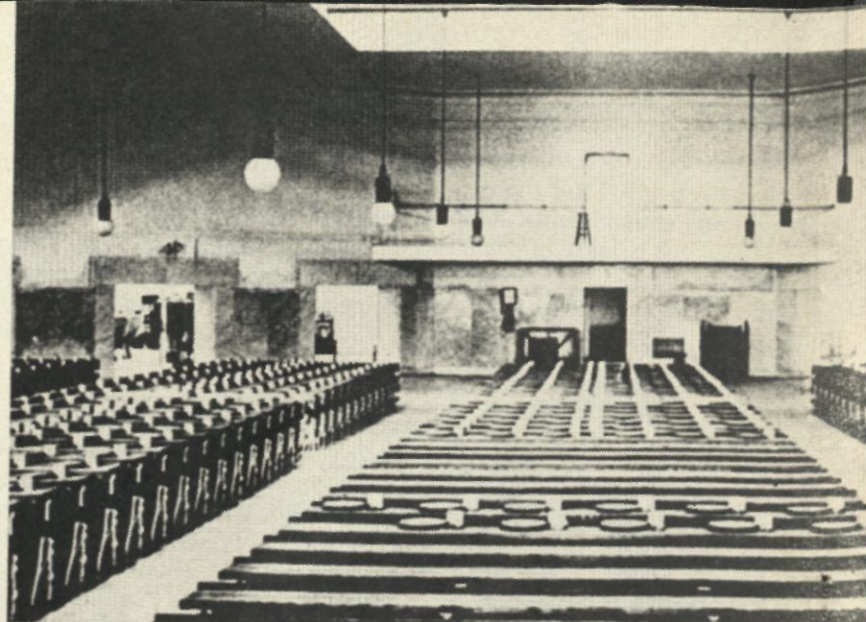
Bennett explains that Stroud, while cultivating a reassuring image of himself in the public mind, actually never ceased being an unruly, even dangerous prisoner at Leavenworth and brought about his own downfall by secreting a knife in his cell. Bennett sometimes displays this weapon to visitors in his office. On one occasion, according to an article by Herbert Corey in *Nation's Business*, he charged that Stroud had manufactured it from a file "for the express purpose of killing me." But even though Stroud has admitted hiding a knife in 1942 (passed to him, he insists, by a stool pigeon bent on providing officials with an excuse for his banishment), the accusation has a curious ring. From 1930 on, Stroud was allowed to possess a veritable arsenal—scalpels, scissors, ice pick, chisels, claw hammers—and it is hard to understand why he would have needed additional armament if he really contemplated mayhem or murder. In attempting to plumb this mystery one must consider one other odd fact—Bennett recently told a reporter (who was discussing another matter) that Stroud was sent to Alcatraz "because he was a nuisance, not because he was a menace," and added, "We do it all the time."



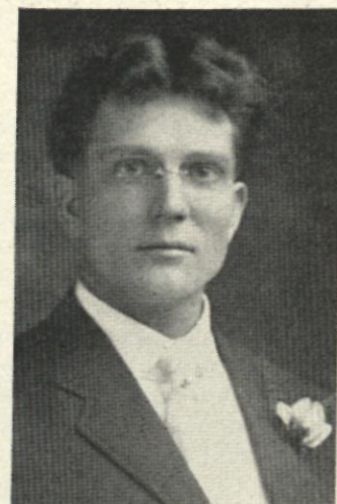
AUTHOR Tom Gaddis, a former probation officer, devoted five years of his life to write his book, *Birdman of Alcatraz*.

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MURDER SCENE was the dining hall at Leavenworth (left) in which Stroud knifed a guard named Andrew Turner. The guards patrolled between long tables where the convicts ate. Stroud's victim is shown at right in formal attire on day he was married in 1908.



STROUD CONTINUED

At Alcatraz, despairing of clemency and forgotten by the world, Stroud was hard put to cope with loneliness and the loss of his work and equipment. Most of his time on The Rock was spent alone in a room the prison bureau has described as "a large, well-lighted and ventilated ward in the prison hospital." The room contained no furniture except two beds, had no washbowl, no toilet, and was ventilated only because Stroud managed to break a piece out of its heavy, barred window with his tin cup. He was locked into the room behind bars and a heavy wooden door for eight years, and he left it under guard only long enough to empty his bedpan once a day and take a shower once a week. He had no newspapers and no radio and was allowed to possess only one library book at a time. To stave off madness he began making detailed nightly lists of "things to do tomorrow." He started teaching himself Latin, French, Italian and criminal law, and simultaneously began a two-volume, 200,000-word work on caged men—an analytical study of the federal penal system from 1790 to 1930—to match his work on caged birds.

He toiled over the book for years, drawing on his own immense knowledge of old prisons and old wardens, the chilling fables and folk tales of imprisoned men, and unabashed personal theories of penology he had developed over many decades. To prepare the final manuscript for publication, since his arthritic handwriting was all but illegible, he printed all 200,000 words by hand, using an old breadboard as a desk and a length of stretched string as a line guide. He had always considered himself the intellectual superior of his old nemesis, Bennett. Now, with nothing but his own ego to sustain him, he grew certain that he was a better theoretical penologist as well, and was in prison only because Bennett did not "dare" to let him out.

Stroud had definite theories on penology: "My system would not be a soft system . . . but there would always be opportunities and advantages to be gained by developing good habits. . . ." As he was finishing his book, he wrote in a letter: "For dramatic writing when I am at my best, I do not have to take a back seat from anyone who ever lived. . . . The secret is total memory . . . I can quote poetry for 12 hours without repeating myself. [This book] will be so far ahead of everything else on the subject that there will be no comparison. But . . . death may be the price tag. . . ."

Convinced that he had produced a masterpiece but fearful that prison authorities would never allow its publication, Stroud attempted one last, awful act of defiance. He wrote a will on onion skin paper, directing the courts to deliver his book to an old friend. Then, believing an autopsy would be done on his body, he slipped the will into a thin metal tube, swallowed it, gulped down a handful of pills he had been secreting, and lay down on his bed to die. He woke up in a strait jacket. His stomach had been pumped, the will had been recovered—and his manuscript was gone. He never saw it again, and to this day neither Bennett nor anyone else in the prison system has given the slightest hint as to whether or not it still exists.

Just what disappointment, loneliness and the self-consuming effects of solitary did to Stroud in the ensuing months would be hard to say. But then, like a miner buried amid the rubble of a cave-in, he became aware that rescue parties were trying, at last, to aid him from the outside. Both his spirits and his confidence revived.

Author Tom Gaddis, at that time a Los Angeles probation officer, and a Beverly Hills real estate lawyer named Stanley Furman were among the first and most important of these self-appointed defenders. Gaddis heard of Stroud in 1950 while chatting with some reporters. He looked up Stroud's brother, read what he could find about the case and became so emotionally involved in the prisoner's plight that he quit his job and began writing *Birdman of Alcatraz*. Attorney Furman, disturbed by what he considered a distortion of

American justice, called at Alcatraz in 1955, became Stroud's counsel, and spoke so sharply that his client was granted three astounding concessions: a toilet, a washbowl and the right to open the wooden door behind which he had been sealed for almost a decade.

Gaddis cut the prisoner in on the profits to accrue from his book, although he and his family had endured periods of real poverty during the five years he worked on it. Furman and Gaddis organized a Release Committee which now numbers such influential citizens as Author Arthur Koestler, Motion Picture Producer Walter Wanger and Penologist Dr. Negley Teeters. Furman also set up a defense fund, which has drawn contributions from all over the world, and drew up a petition for executive clemency—which the Justice Department refused to forward to the White House since, it ironically explained, Stroud was eligible for parole. But it was Stroud himself, basking again in the delicious warmth of publicity and once more captain of his soul, who developed the judicial weapon upon which the defense now bases its fondest hopes.

When Stroud's lawyers appealed his death sentence back in 1918, they based their argument upon that provision of the Fifth Amendment which reads "nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb. . . ." This is normally interpreted to mean that no defendant, having been found innocent, may be tried again for the same capital offense. Stroud's defense, however, took a different tack, and maintained that he had been subject to double jeopardy even though guilty. Why? One jury had specified hanging after a previous jury had forbidden capital punishment. The appeal was rejected by the Supreme Court. But in 1957—38 years later—the court considered another case involving this rare interpretation of double jeopardy. And this time—*Green vs. U.S.*—it found for the defendant.

Stroud writes his own petition

STROUD asked me to come to Alcatraz," says Furman, "and as soon as he saw me he said, 'I'm out! The Supreme Court reversed itself in the Green case!' I had to ask him, 'What's the Green case?' I hadn't even heard of it, but he'd gotten all the details, somehow, on the prison grapevine and he had immediately seen its implications. In fact, he told me just about what Mr. Justice Frankfurter said, as I discovered later, in dissenting: that the court could not rule for Green without reopening the Stroud case. Bob wanted to write his own petition for habeas corpus. He's a good guardhouse lawyer and I told him by all means to go ahead. It took him six months, partly because they refused to let him have more than one law book at a time, and partly because he had to learn a lot of new law to develop his thesis. But when it was done I could see no way of improving it. In fact, I was enormously impressed by his logic and his language."

Since Stroud was a prisoner in Alcatraz, it would have been logical enough to have filed the petition in the U.S. District Court in San Francisco. Stroud, however, insisted that it be sent to a federal court in Kansas where he had been tried originally. Both this point of strategy and the reasoning and language of the petition itself would seem to refute Bennett's contention that "the old man is getting senile." Cries Furman, "Like a fox! I would have represented him here in California, but Bob preferred to go before a judge in Kansas as a pauper. 'Judges here don't know me,' he told me, 'but a Kansas judge will remember the Stroud case. He'll feel it is more important than a San Francisco judge. He'll appoint good lawyers for me—in fact, he'll probably appoint his best friends and he'll listen to them.'"

As it turned out, U.S. District Judge Walter A. Huxman of Kansas could hardly have treated Stroud with more consideration. He ruled against the petition [since only the Supreme Court—which will automatically review it later—can reverse itself], but he congratulated the

STROUD CONTINUED

prisoner for "much logic and sound reasoning . . . in an exhaustive and able brief." He also noted that "in the court's view" the 1920 order of the Attorney General specifying solitary confinement had been illegal, "an unwarranted assumption of power and . . . wholly void."

By the time he ruled, however, this last point had become academic. Last July, four months before Judge Huxman considered the petition, Stroud was finally taken out of Alcatraz and moved to comfortable living quarters in a wing of the federal prison hospital at Springfield, Mo. In the intervening months he has been allowed more freedom than he has known since the night he was arrested in Juneau a half century ago. One can only guess whether Bennett's decision to remove him from solitary was simply prudent anticipation of public censure or whether it sprang from some deeper sense of concern, some readjustment of values. One can only wonder, in fact, what jailer and prisoner have truly come to think of each other in 30 years. They are not only old antagonists who have come to know each other's every facet of mind—but old acquaintances, too. During Stroud's years at Alcatraz, Bennett seldom visited the prison without calling on "old Bob" and asking after his health. Stroud received him politely. "Never in my life have I hated anyone so much that I was not willing to forgive or forget," he wrote recently, ". . . although I never accept anyone on faith and am convinced that the issue [between us] is bigger than any personal feelings we may have in the matter. . . ."

Whatever prompted his transfer, however, Stroud has reacted with an almost childish wonder and delight to his new life. "I have my own room," he wrote to Furman, "and it is one of the nicest and coolest. It has two big windows. I have my own toilet, bath and lavatory and get hot water in one minute, day or night. It is like a new world. Imagine how it feels to me to be able to sleep without a door being locked on me, to talk to whom I please, and, if I want to be alone, to be able to close my door without being disturbed. I can give you the tone of the place by telling you that a guard just stepped up to my door and said, 'Do you mind, sir, if I look out your window for a moment?' I have some men working on the yard and I know some of them want to watch the ball game on TV." Imagine that after what I have seen.

"I probably walk three miles a day and the yard is a beautiful park of five acres or more. I've met many old friends. The head nurse has read much of me and had been anxious to meet me and my physician, Dr. Hoversten, told one party that I am the most amazing man he ever interviewed. I have been told that my I.Q. is 139. If I had no hope for greater things, I know I could live just as happy and satisfactory a life here as anywhere on earth."

But Stroud still burns to get out because "accomplishment is the only reason for living." What if all his hopes fail?—his petition, his hope for spreading public sympathy, and perhaps even some eventual award of damages by Congress? He replies in Italian with a quotation from the oath once administered to Athenian soldiers: "*Combatterò per esse, solo o con tutti.*" "I have translated this," he wrote Lawyer Furman, "as follows: 'I will fight to the death for them, too, either with all of you at my side, or alone, singlehanded against all of you.'"



LATEST PHOTOGRAPH OF STROUD (center) was made last November as he was taken to federal court in Kansas for habeas corpus hearing.